

A Blueprint for Vehicle Impound Programs

Problem Statement

A 1990, DMV study reports that, of drivers with a suspended or revoked license, 33% had a criminal record and 85% of those drivers used their automobile in the commission of a crime. Suspended or revoked drivers were involved in four times more fatal collisions and six times more injury crashes as licensed drivers. Further, these drivers experienced 11 times more DUI convictions as licensed drivers.

In California, 42% of drivers with a suspended or revoked license failed to appear for court hearings, 29% had a prior DUI conviction, and 17% were suspended because of no vehicle insurance.

In San Francisco about 50% of all vehicles impounded for 30 days had drivers cited for CVC 14601. Approximately 20% of those drivers were suspended for CVC 14601a; 14601.2a; 14601.3a; and 14601.5a. Approximately 40% to 50% of all impounded vehicles were unclaimed and went to lien sale in San Francisco and Santa Rosa.

In an effort to combat the growing problem of suspended, revoked, and unlicensed drivers, vehicle code section 14602.6 was enacted to provide for the 30-day impoundment of a vehicle driven by a driver with a suspended or revoked license or who has never been issued a license. The 30 day impound law was an integral component of the Safe Streets Act of 1994 (Katz, AB3148) and became effective January 1, 1995.

OTS Vehicle Impound Programs

OTS has funded vehicle impound programs in San Francisco, Merced, Modesto, Petaluma, San Diego, Stockton, Visalia, Redlands, Napa, El Monte, Fresno, Vallejo, El Cajon, South Gate, Upland, and Eureka.

Vehicle Impounding Impacts:

- Fatal and Injury Collisions
- Alcohol Involved Collisions
- Nighttime Collisions
- Hit-and-Run Collisions
- Crime
- Unsafe Speed
- Unregistered Vehicles
- Uninsured Drivers
- High Polluting Vehicles
- Unsafe Vehicles
- Overwhelming public support

- Self-funded program through the collection of violator paid cost recovery fees

NOTE: Approximately 40% of all vehicles impounded are not claimed by the registered owner.

San Francisco 1995 and 1996

Traffic Impact

- Impounded 15,000 vehicles
- Reduced DUI fatal and injury collisions 63% (173 vs. 65)
- Reduced hit-and-run fatal and injury collisions 44% (1,484 vs. 837)
- \$1.5 million collected in cost recovery fees

Crime Impact

- 412 narcotic arrests
- 326 felony arrests
- 263 felony warrant arrests
- 179 stolen vehicles recovered
- 141 firearms confiscated

San Diego 1997-1998

Traffic Impact

- Impounded 32,096 vehicles
- Reduced hit-and-run fatal and injury collisions 23% (750 vs. 580)
- Reduced nighttime fatal and injury collisions 30% (890 vs. 619)
- \$2.4 million collected in cost recovery fees

Crime Impact

- 206 felony arrests
- 268 felony drug arrests
- 68 arrests on felony warrants
- 49 stolen vehicles recovered
- 34 confiscated weapons
- 1,361 other misdemeanor arrests

El Monte 1997-1998

Traffic Impact

- Impounded 3,168 vehicles
- Reduced total fatal and injury collisions 17% (487 vs. 405)

- Reduced alcohol involved fatal and injury collisions 53% (77 vs. 36)
- Reduced nighttime fatal and injury collision 40% (82 vs. 49)
- \$148,200k in vehicle impound fund

Crime Impact

- 149 felony drug arrests
- 53 confiscated weapons
- 490 stolen vehicles recovered
- 480 other misdemeanor and felony arrests
- 40 arrests on felony warrants

Fresno 1997-1998

Traffic Impact

- Impounded 10,068
- Reduced total fatal and injury collision 18% (2055 vs. 1679)
- Reduced alcohol involved fatal and injury collision 19% (250 vs. 202)
- Reduced nighttime fatal and injury collision 21% (291 vs. 231)
- Reduced hit-and-run fatal and injury collisions 21% (222 vs. 176)
- \$795k collected in cost recovery fees

Crime Impact

- 0 felony drug arrests
- 0 confiscated weapons
- 3 stolen vehicles recovered
- 10 other misdemeanor and felony arrests
- 0 felony warrants

California Vehicle Impound Study

In November 1997, DMV released the results a study on the “Evaluation of the Specific Deterrent Effect of Vehicle Impoundment on Suspended, Revoked, and Unlicensed Drivers in California”. The study contrasted one year subsequent driving records for subjects whose vehicles were impounded with similar subjects who would have had their vehicles impounded, but who did not because their driving offense occurred in 1994, the year before the vehicle impound law was implemented.

The study found that first-time and repeat offenders with impounded vehicle had significantly fewer subsequent driving license convictions, subsequent total traffic convictions, and subsequent collisions than drivers whose vehicles were not impounded.

- First-time offenders had a 24% lower rate of subsequent driving-while-suspended (DWS) and driving-while-unlicensed convictions
- Repeat offenders had a 34% lower rate of subsequent DWS and DWU convictions.
- First-time offenders had an 18% lower average rate of subsequent total traffic convictions.
- Repeat offenders had a 22% lower rate of subsequent total traffic convictions.
- First-time offenders had 25% fewer subsequent collisions.
- Repeat offenders had 38% fewer subsequent collisions.

According to DMV researcher Dave DeYoung “vehicle impounding strengthens license actions, deters drivers from violating their license suspension or revocation, reduces recidivism, and increases traffic safety.”

The Most Serious Offenders

14601a CVC Driving privilege has been suspended or revoked for a conviction for reckless driving; negligent or incompetent operation.

14601.2a CVC License was suspended or revoked for a prior DUI conviction
 14601.3a CVC License was suspended or revoked because of at least three prior DUI convictions (habitual offenders).

14601.5a License was suspended or revoked for refusing a chemical test or an excessive BAC.

Goals

Project Goals - Goals serve as the foundation upon which your project is built. Goals are what you hope to accomplish by implementing a vehicle impound program.

1. To reduce total fatal and injury collisions ___ % from the calendar ____ base year total of ____ to ____ by _____, 200__.
2. To reduce alcohol involved fatal and injury collisions __% from the calendar ____ base year total of ____ to ____ by _____, 200__.
3. To reduce hit-and-run fatal and injury collisions __% from the calendar ____ base year total of ____ to ____ by _____, 200__.

4. To reduce the involvement of habitual DUI offenders (CVC 14601.3a) in fatal and injury collisions ___% from the calendar ____ base year total of ___ to ___ by _____, 200__.
5. To reduce nighttime (2100 - 0300 hours) fatal and injury collisions ___% from the calendar ____ base year total of ___ to ___ by _____, 200__.
6. To increase the conviction rate for CVC section 14601 (driving with a suspended or revoked license) cases *for those offenders that appear in court* ___ percentage points from the calendar ____ base year rate of ___% to ___% by _____, 200__.
7. To increase the misdemeanor prosecution rate for CVC section 14601 (driving with a suspended or revoked license) cases ___ percentage points from the calendar ____ base year rate of ___% to ___% by _____, 200__.
8. To increase the conviction rate for drivers with suspended or revoked licenses with prior DUI convictions (CVC 14601.3a habitual offenders) *that appear in court* ___ percentage points from the calendar ____ base year rate of ___% to ___% by _____, 200__.

Objectives

Project Objectives - Objectives are tasks or activities you undertake during the project period to make the goal(s) a reality. Objectives move you closer to achieving your overall goal(s). Objectives are used to measure your success. Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 must be included in all grants.

Public Information and Education

1. To e-mail or fax all press releases or media advisories/alerts to the OTS Regional Coordinator for approval in advance of their release.
2. To use the following standard language in all press materials: ***“Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the Business, Transportation & Housing Agency.”***
3. To submit print clips **by 9 a.m.** to the OTS Regional Coordinator and Public Information Officer, Janet Lane, via e-mail at jlane@ots.ca.gov or fax at (916) 262-2960. All clips should include publication name and date the article was published
4. To FAX to OTS (916) 262 - 2960, at least a month in advance, a short description of any new traffic safety event or program. Address the fax to the OTS Public Information Officer and OTS Program Coordinator.

5. To conduct a press conference or media event by _____, 200__ to kick-off or publicize the grant. OTS will be notified at least two week in advance of the grant kick-off event.
6. To encourage local media to highly publicize specific enforcement efforts targeting impaired driving, and report the results of these efforts.

To meet with newspaper editorial boards to promote traffic safety articles.

To develop local hotlines to report DUI offenders who continue to drive with a suspended or revoked license and to distribute the offender "hot list" to traffic and patrol officers.

7. To monitor the judicial disposition of citations for driving with a suspended or revoked license. In addition, meet with judges to support the strict enforcement of driver license laws.
8. To conduct an aggressive public information and education campaign to stress the consequences of driving unlicensed or with a suspended or revoked license.
9. To develop localized promotional materials to be used as incentive items to encourage public and officer support for the "Vehicle Impound" program. Incentive items may include badges, stickers, T-shirts, ball caps, sweatshirts, coffee cups, press kits, and pamphlets.
10. To conduct a language assessment of the Project's service area to determine needs for materials in languages other than English by _____. 200__.

Enforcement

11. To conduct a minimum of ____ DUI checkpoints by _____, 200__, and an additional ____ DUI checkpoints by _____, 200__.

The following data will be reported on the "Quarterly Evaluation Data Form, Schedule C":

- Vehicles Passing Through the Checkpoints
- Vehicles Screened
- Field Sobriety Tests
- DUI Arrests
- Criminal Arrests

To maximize effectiveness, it may be necessary to conduct a checkpoint operation at more than one location on any given night. Each checkpoint should be highly publicized and visible.

12. To establish a mandatory tow policy (No License, No Car, No Exception) by _____, 200__.
13. To increase the total number of vehicles impounded for 30 days by __% from the calendar ____ base year of ____ to ____ by _____, 200__ and by an additional __% from ____ to ____ by _____, 200__.
14. To increase the number of vehicles impounded for 30 days of drivers with a suspended and/or revoked license __% from the calendar ____ base year total of ____ to ____ by _____, 200__, and by an additional __% from ____ to _____, 200__.
15. To measure the grant's impact on crime by tracking non-traffic related arrests that initiate from DUI checkpoints and/or other grant supported activities or operations. Some of the crime statistics to be recorded include: narcotic arrests, confiscated weapons, stolen vehicles recovered, criminal misdemeanor arrests, criminal arrests, and felony warrant arrests.
16. To establish a warrant service program targeting habitual DUI offenders cited for driving on a suspended or revoked license and who failed to appear in court by _____, 200__.
17. To create vertical prosecution with District Attorney's Office to facilitate the prosecution of unlicensed drivers and drivers with a suspended or revoked license by _____, 200__.
18. To implement a "Stakeout" program that employs police officers to watch the house of a DUI multiple offenders that has lost their drivers license by _____, 200__. If the offender is observed driving, they are arrested.
19. To conduct _____ special enforcement operations aimed at the persistent drinking driver and those that continue to drive with a suspended or revoked license by _____, 200__, and additional _____ operations by _____, 200__.
20. To develop and implement a "Vehicle Impound" training program for patrol and traffic officer's by _____, 200__. The training program may include reviewing DMV's revised and "easier to read" driver license printouts; service codes; report writing; and various sections of CVC 14601 and CVC 12500.
21. To develop an Operational Plan to establish the method of operation and the policies applicable to carry out the grant program by _____, 200__.

NOTE: You should meet with your Traffic Court Commissioner and District Attorney to determine the impact of this program on their workload. The District Attorney's Office will have to provide base year information for goals numbered 6,7, and 8. You are not limited to the "Blueprint" objectives.

Nothing in this "Blueprint" shall be interpreted as a requirement, formal or informal, that a police officer issue a specified or predetermined number of citations in pursuance of the goals and objectives hereunder.

OTS Vehicle Impound Contacts

San Francisco	Officer Bob Mattox	415 553-1398
San Diego	Sergeant George Youkhanna	619 495-7832
El Cajon	Sergeant Tom Michael	619 579-3311
Fresno	Lieutenant Andy Hall	209 498-2205
Visalia	Sergeant Mike McGee	209 738-3237
Davis***	Officer John Wilson	916 756-3740
Vallejo	Sergeant Jim Brown	707 648-4329
Napa ***	Sergeant Ron Allgower	707 258-7884
Oceanside	Sergeant Randy Judd	760 439-9246
Petaluma	Officer Ken Savano	707 778-4455
Yuba City	Sergeant John Buckland	916 822-4795
Merced	Traffic Sergeant	209 385-6908
Modesto	Sergeant Burl Condit	209 572-9592
Stockton	Sergeant Mark Helms	209 937-8518
El Monte	Sergeant Ken Alva	626 580-2195
Upland	Captain John Cannon	909 946-7624 x3340
Santa Ana	Sergeant Bill Ehart	714 245-8213
Santa Cruz	Sergeant Tom Bailey	831 429-3230
South Gate	Sergeant Keith Underwood	213 563-5493
Whittier	Sheryl Mendoza	562 945-8254
West Sacramento	Sergeant Dan Rudin	916 372-2461x315

***** Collect storage and administrative fees**